

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 06385 061246Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6385

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, FR

SUBJ: MFA OFFICIAL ON SAUVAGNARGUES VISIT

REF: TEL AVIV 6291

SUMMARY: VISIT OF FRENCH FONMIN SAUVAGNARGUES TO ISRAEL
CARRIED OUT LARGELY "BY THE NUMBERS." ISRAELI ESTIMATES FOR
PROSPECTS OF RECONCILIATION WITH GOF ON PROBLEMS OF MIDDLE
EAST POLICY PROVED JUSTIFIABLY LOW. GOI FONMIN ALLON SUMMED
UP TONE OF DISCUSSIONS BY SAYING "...WE AGREED TO DISAGREE."
MFA OFFICIAL YA-ISH SUMMARIZED FRENCH POSITIONS DURING TALKS
AS FOLLOWS: FRANCE DOES NOT SEE JORDAN AS FACTOR IN SETTLE-
MENT OF PALESTINIAN QUESTION; GOF DISCLAIMS ASPIRATIONS AT
THIS STAGE TO ROLE AS MEDIATOR IN MIDDLE EAST BUT WISHES TO KEEP
FUTURE OPTIONS OPEN; SAUVAGNARGUES URGED ISRAELIS TO DEAL WITH
PLO DESPITE QUESTIONABLE LIGITIMACY OF LATTER TO REPRESENT
PALESTINIANS; FRENCH FONMIN DENIED FEAR OF RENEWED OIL BOYCOT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 06385 061246Z

INFLUENTIAL IN DETERMINING GOF MIDDLE EAST POLICY. WHILE

ISRAELIS PREFERRED THIS SORT OF DUAL MONOLOGUE TO NO TALKS AT ALL, GOI OBVIOUSLY RESIGNED TO IRRECONCILABILITY OF VIEWPOINTS ON POLITICAL ISSUES, THOUGH THEY DO NOTE FRENCH HAVE NOT BEEN UNHELPFUL IN BRUSSELS ON ECONOMIC FRONT. END SUMMARY.

1. AMID ATMOSPHERE DESCRIBED BY ONE ISRAELI OFFICIAL AS "HEAVY" FRENCH FONMIN SAVGNARGUES COMPLETED THREE DAYS OF TALKS WITH GOI LEADERS NOVEMBER 1. WHILE MAINTAINING DIPLOMATIC DECORUM, BOTH SAUVAGNARGUES AND ISRAELI FONMIN ALLON MADE REPEATED PUBLIC REFERENCES TO FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES OF VIEWPOINT BETWEEN THEIR TWO COUNTRIES ON MIDDLE EAST QUESTIONS. DIR CONTINENTAL EUROPE DET OF MFA, NISSIM YA'ISH, PROVIDED FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT OF TALKS IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF.

2. FIRST VISIT BY A FRENCH FONMIN IN HISTORY OF ISRAEL HAD EARLY ON BEEN TOUTED AS PRELUDE TO "TURNING THE PAGE" IN RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES FOLLOWING ELECTION OF GISCARD GOVERNMENT. BUT, TO THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT, ISRAELIS QUICKLY LEARNED THAT GOF MIDDLE EAST POLICY REMAINED UNCHANGED AND, LONG BEFORE HIS ARRIVAL, SAUVGNARGUES' VISIT RECOGNIZED AS EXERCISE IN OBSERVATION OF AMENITIES. YA'ISH OBSERVED THAT, EXCEPT FOR VALUE OF PERSONAL CONTACT BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND SAUVAGNARGUES, SUBSTANTIVE ASPECTS OF DISCUSSIONS MIGHT JUST AS WELL HAVE BEEN HANDLED BETWEEN AMBASSADORS, AS BOTH SIDES REITERATED THEIR ALREADY WELL-KNOWN AND INCOMPATIBLE LINES. (YA'ISH "WE WENT 26 YEARS WITHOUT A VISIT FROM A FRENCH FONMIN, WE COULD HAVE GONE WITHOUT THIS ONE.") ISRAELIS HAD EXPECTED LITTLE ELSE IN VIEW OF RECENT EVENTS, BUT HAMMERED AWAY AND YA'ISH CLAIMED GOI PERCEIVED "BETTER UNDERSTANDING" OF THEIR POSITION ON PART OF SAUVAGNARGUES. YA'ISH POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT PROBLEMS WITH FRANCE NOT INDICATIVE OF RELATIONS WITH EUROPE AS A WHOLE AND THAT EVEN GOF CAREFULLY SEPARATES ECONOMIC FROM POLITICAL INTERESTS IN DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL. FOR EXAMPLE, IN CURRENT GOI NEGOTIATIONS FOR RENEWAL OF TRADE AGREEMENT WITH COMMON MARKET COUNTRIES, FRANCE, ACCORDING TO YA'ISH, "...IS NOT INTERFERING POLICALLY IN BRUSSELS."

3. FRENCH FONMIN CALLED FOR WITHDRAWAL TO PRE-JUNE, 1967 LINES AND NEGOTIATIONS WITH PALESTINIANS AS SIMULTANEOUS STEPS. FRENCH EVIDENTLY DO NOT VIEW JORDAN AS FACTOR IN SOLUTION OF CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 06385 061246Z

PALESTINAIAN PROBLEM, CALLING PRINCIPLE OF PALESTINIAN INTEGRATION IN A JORDANIAN STATE "COMPLETE FALLACY." SAUVAGNARGUES CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN WELL-INFORMED WHILE IN AMMAN THAT JORDANIANS AND PALESTINIANS DO NOT RPT NOT MIX. ISRAELIS COUNTERED WITH STANDARD POSITION THAT SOLUTION LIES IN ESTABLISHMENT OF "A STATE EAST OF ISRAEL...REGARDLESS OF WHAT IT CALLED" (I.E. JORDAN, JORDANIAN/PALESTINIAN FEDERATION, ETC) WITHOUT DELVING INTO QUESTIONS OF BOUNDARIES AND COMPOSITION OF SUCH A STATE.

4. TURNING TO PLO, SAUVAGNARGUES URGED GOI TO NEGOTIATE WITH THEM WHILE AT SAME TIME ADMITTING THEY HELD NO OFFICIAL "DEMOCRATIC" MANDATE TO REPRESENT PALESTINIANS. HE COMPARED THEM TO FLN IN ALGERIA, CLAIMING INTENSITY OF THEIR ACTIVITIES LENT LEGITIMACY TO THEIR CLAIMS TO REPRESENT PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. THIS COMPARISON WAS ROUNDLY REJECTED BY ALLON IN PRESS CONFERENCE SUBSEQUENT TO SAUVAGNARGUES' DEPARTURE. THE FLN, SAID ALLON "NEVER SET ITSELF THE AIM OF DESTROYING FRANCE." SAUVAGNARGUES ALSO STATED HE HAD NEVER USED TERM "PALESTINIAN STATE" IN DISCUSSIONS WITH ARAB STATESMEN OR WITH ARAFAT. (COMMENT: YA'ISH FELT THIS POINT MADE TO ISRAELIS DUE TO FUROR OVER TERM "PATRIE" AS USED IN GISCARD PRESS CONFERENCE. END COMMENT.)

5. SAUVAGNARGUES EVIDENTLY INFORMED GOI FRANCE HAD NO IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES OR ASPIRATIONS IN AREA AND DID NOT WISH TO INTERFERE IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT "RESERVED RIGHT" (YA'ISH'S WORDS) TO PLAY (UNSPECIFIED) ROLE IN FUTURE: PERHAPS AS PROVIDER OF ARMS. ISRAELIS REACTED BY CLAIMING RECENT GOF ACTIONS (I.E. PLO VOTE IN UN, GISCARD PRESS CONFERENCE, SAUVAGNARGUES MEETING WITH ARAFAT) COULD HARDLY BE INTERPRETED AS LOW-KEY, UNINFLUENTIAL MOVES.

6. FRENCH FONMIN DENIED THAT GOF MIDDLE EAST POLICY BASED UPON FEAR OF RENEWED OIL BOYCOTT AND STATED FRENCH HAD GIVEN UP HOPE OF RECEIVING PRIVILEGED TREATMENT FROM ARABS.

7. COMMENT: DESPITE LACK OF POSITIVE RESPONSES FROM FRENCH AND FACT THAT SOME ISRAELIS HAVE CHARACTERIZED IT AS "DIALOGUE OF THE DEAF," VISIT PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY FOR FIRST-HAND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND WE THINK SENIOR OFFICIALS HERE BELIEVE THAT, ON BALANCE, THEY MADE CORRECT DECISION IN GOING AHEAD WITH IT.
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PAGE 04 TEL AV 06385 061246Z

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